

fieldwork was done, and most of the records are a result of opportunistic bird watching. Some of these birds have not been recorded previously by either D'Abreu (1935) or Hewetson (1955). Species recorded here but not mentioned by D'Abreu (1935) or Hewetson (1955) are given in the following table.

The sightings of the last six species in Kanha National Park given in Table 1 is of certain interest. The forest eagle-owl (*Bubo nipalensis*) is a resident of Himalayas, southern Western Ghats and southern Eastern Ghats, and inhabits dense evergreen and moist-deciduous forest (Ripley 1982). The present record is the only one from central India from a moist deciduous forest. The chestnutheaded bee-eater (*Merops leschenaulti*) is also a bird of the hills of the north and northeast India, Eastern and Western Ghats complex. But our recent records show that the birds pass through central India regularly in summer (passage migrant?), suggesting the possible migration of the northern population to the south during winter. The yellowbacked sunbird (*Aethopyga siparaja*) is another interesting record from Kanha. D'Abreu (1935) recorded it from Balaghat, and Hewetson (1955) never saw it anywhere in Madhya Pradesh (MP). Our observations show that it is a regular winter visitor from the Himalayas, possibly to

TABLE 1
BIRD SPECIES OBSERVED IN KANHA TIGER RESERVE NOT RECORDED IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCES BY D'ABREU (1935) [*] OR IN MADHYA PRADESH BY HEWETSON (1955)[+]

Black bittern	<i>Ixobrychus flavicollis</i> +
Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i> +
Bonelli's eagle	<i>Hieraaetus fasciatus</i> +
Booted hawk eagle	<i>H. pennatus</i> +
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i> +
Forest eagle owl	<i>Bubo nipalensis</i> +
Chestnutheaded bee-eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i> +*
Black bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes madagascariensis</i> +*
Smallbilled mountain thrush	<i>Zoothera dauma</i> +*
Yellowbacked sunbird	<i>Aethopyga siparaja</i> +*
Ortolan bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i> +*

other places in east MP, apart from Kanha. D'Abreu (1913) published a note in the *JBNHS* on a bird he shot in Balaghat, as the range extension of the Himalayan yellowbacked sunbird (*Aethopyga seheriae*). The ortolan bunting (*Emberiza hortulana*) is definitely a straggler, as there have been only two or three previous records from India (Ripley 1982).

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19. *HEMIDACTYLUS FLAVIVIRIDIS* RÜPPELL FEEDING ON A GECKO EGG

According to Daniel (1983), and Tikader and Sharma (1992), the northern house gecko (*Hemidactylus flaviviridis* Rüppell) is primarily insectivorous. Occasionally, it is known to

become cannibalistic (Daniel 1983).

On April 22, 2000, at about 0730 hrs, a northern house gecko was seen by us on a bathroom wall in D.B.N. Hostel, University of

Rajasthan, Jaipur, with a spherical white egg in its mouth. From its colour, size and general appearance, the egg looked like that of *H. flaviviridis*. The gecko was moving upwards and after about 2.5 m, it broke the eggshell with two or three blows. The empty eggshell was then thrown away. The gecko positioned itself right below the flowing yolk and started licking it up from the lower-most point, gradually moving upwards. While it was licking the yolk, another gecko appeared and approached it, but was chased away. It consumed the entire yolk within seven minutes. The gecko then moved to another wall.

The empty eggshell was c. 11 mm in diameter. After watching this strange behaviour, we examined all baths and toilets minutely. Many geckos were seen on the walls. Many eggs of

house geckos were also seen below various hideouts in ones and twos. The area was apparently a favourite breeding site of the geckos. The egg was perhaps lifted from one of the clutches from the same locality.

Feeding on gecko eggs by *H. flaviviridis* is an unusual behaviour for this species, hence worth placing on record.

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20. UROPELTID SNAKES AND THEIR PREDATORS

Birds are among the many predators of uropeltid snakes. Rajendran (1985) has reported predation by domestic fowl, turkey, guinea fowl, peafowl, owls and wild pigs on uropeltids exposed by digging earth. We have observed some new predators as described below.

I. The house crow (*Corvus splendens*) was seen to prey on *Uropeltis ellioti* at Matighatta in Hassan district of Karnataka State, on August 15, 1999 at 1440 hrs, in a coconut and areca farm. It had just rained and the soil was wet. We observed the snake crawling on open ground, between the areca palms. A house crow swooped down and pecked at the snake, but did not attempt to take it away. The snake immediately coiled itself around one of the areca palms and tried to burrow into the soil, but the crow did not allow it to do so. When the crow moved off

on being disturbed by the crowd of people watching, the snake took the opportunity and disappeared into the soil.

II. Two other instances are from Anaimalai hill ranges, Tamil Nadu.

(a) On August 21, 1998 at 1810 hrs, in the forest fragment of Varatuparai, we observed a Malabar whistling thrush (*Myiophonus horsfieldii*) preying on *Uropeltis ocellatus*. We were sitting among the tea bushes adjacent to a patch of forest, when we saw a snake come out of the soil, near the base of a tea bush (*Camellia thea*). A thrush flew down and sat on a branch of the tea bush, just above the snake, and watched it. A few seconds later, the thrush caught the crawling snake at the mid-body with its beak. It carried the snake into another tea bush and started tearing open the body. All this